

Letters from Fritz Adler — We the People

December 22, 2025

I came to America in 1951.¹ Became a citizen in 1956.²

The judge read words I'd heard before but never understood: "We the People of the United States... do ordain and establish this Constitution."³

Not "We the Government." Not "We the President." Not "We the Senator" or "We the Congressman" or "We the Governor."

We the People.

I'd grown up in a place where responsibility flowed upward. Where ordinary people told themselves the problems were too complicated, the situations too urgent, for them to question. Where saying "I don't understand what's happening—important people surely know better" felt like wisdom.

Standing in that Cleveland courthouse, I understood something different: here, the responsibility wasn't supposed to go upward. It was supposed to stay with us.

The people who wrote that Constitution had left a king.⁴ I'd left a place where one man decided what the law meant. They'd risked everything on an idea: that power unchecked becomes tyranny, and that the only real protection is a people who refuse to give their power away.

Not because they're perfect. Not because they understand everything. Because when you hand your judgment to someone else and say "you handle it," you've given away the one thing that keeps anyone honest.

I wrote in September about patterns I was seeing—patterns I'd hoped never to see again.⁵ Since then, they haven't slowed.

What I see are early steps that matter because they come before crises. The small transfers of responsibility that feel reasonable in isolation. The moment when "too big for me to handle" becomes "someone else's job."

When I was young in Germany, I watched ordinary people make those transfers. Often it's because we assume someone else is already on it. That the experts have it covered. That questioning would only make things harder.

A German teacher who survived those years wrote about it later. He said people kept telling themselves each step was small, each explanation made sense. "We didn't see it growing," he wrote, "until it was over our heads."⁶

I recognize the habit I saw as a child—handing judgment upward because it feels safer. Different context. Different specifics. Same pattern of what happens when people stop feeling responsible for knowing what's true.

I.

Measure twice, cut once. That's what you do when you're responsible for getting something right. You check. You verify. Because once it's cut, it's cut.

In 2024, the Coast Guard stopped 125 boats they suspected of carrying drugs.⁷ When they boarded and searched those boats, they found drugs on 91 of them.⁸ That's about three in four.⁹ One in four boats they suspected turned out to be clean.¹⁰

Since September, U.S. forces have killed at least 17 people on boats in international waters.¹¹ The government called them "drug smugglers" and "narcoterrorists."¹² There were no arrests. No trials. No boarding to verify.¹³

Human Rights Watch said the strikes "violated international human rights law."¹⁴ Amnesty International said "this may be an extrajudicial execution, which is murder."¹⁵ When someone characterized them as war crimes, the Vice President responded on September 6: "I don't give a shit what you call it."¹⁶

One in four boats we suspect contain no drugs when the Coast Guard checks.

Some people repeat: "They were drug smugglers." They don't ask how we know.

Some people focus on the language. Some say "I wish he'd just shut his mouth" or "he's a dolt"—turning it into an eye-roll, while the words quietly reset what we accept as normal.

Some people say: "There's too much happening. I can't keep track."

That last one—I understand it. It feels like too much. And that’s the problem.

When everything feels overwhelming, we stop trying to know for ourselves. We let someone else decide what matters. We measure once—sometimes not at all.

Once you cut, it’s cut.

You can want traffickers stopped and still insist on proof before lethal force. Both can be true.

The issue isn’t who makes the call. It’s whether there is any independent way to stop it, test it, or reverse it before it’s final.

When a decision like that moves faster than verification, and without a place for review, the safeguard isn’t delayed — it’s gone.

That is a very specific kind of power.

The men who wrote our Constitution understood this. They’d lived under a king who acted first and explained later—or never explained at all.¹⁷ They built a system to slow decisions like this down on purpose. Not because they distrusted action, but because they understood how easily speed can replace accountability.

They had already lived under a system where decisions were final first and examined later. They knew what disappears when nothing stands in between.

II.

In March, a woman named Aimee Bock was convicted for running a \$250 million fraud scheme.¹⁸ She ran a nonprofit called Feeding Our Future, supposed to be feeding children during the pandemic. Instead, she and others submitted false claims for meals never served and pocketed the money.¹⁹ Several people involved in the scheme were from Minnesota’s Somali community.²⁰

The fraud was real. People stole money meant for hungry children. Justice must be served.

On December 2, the President said about Somali immigrants: “I don’t want them in our country... They are bad for our country. They shouldn’t be here.”²¹

On December 9: “We’re going to get them the hell out. I say they’re disgusting people. I don’t want to see them. I don’t want to look at them. We are moving them out.”^{[22](#)}

Not “prosecute the criminals.”

Not seize Aimee Bock’s assets and recover the \$1.9 million that prosecutors said she personally stole.^{[23](#)}

Instead:

“They’re disgusting people.”

A president took crimes by a few and projected them onto a whole community.

I know not everyone will confront, but even a brief “that’s not right” sets a boundary.

What I notice is silence.

When someone describes an entire group as “disgusting,” there’s no pause. Often it’s just the discomfort of speaking up that keeps us quiet.

I know the urge to avoid awkwardness—I felt it myself—but that quiet can signal acceptance.

I’ve seen how this works.

When something wrong starts to feel normal, silence doesn’t keep you neutral. It resets the standard. Not all at once, but gradually. What passes without response becomes the reference point. And that spreads—not just through leaders, but through neighbors, coworkers, and ordinary people watching what seems to be tolerated.

A German who lived through those years said later: “At the time, nothing felt dramatic. Each step seemed minor, and life went on.”^{[24](#)}

Another remembered: “No one ever said, ‘This is where we draw the line.’ We just adjusted, little by little.”^{[25](#)}

Only afterward did many of them realize that the meaning of “acceptable” had shifted—and that they had shifted with it.

Fraud demands prosecution. Eye-rolling does not stop neighbors from becoming targets instead of people.

III.

In 2019, an immigration judge ruled that Kilmar Abrego Garcia could not be deported to El Salvador.²⁶ A court order. Binding. With the force of law.²⁷

On March 15, the administration deported him anyway.²⁸

In April, a federal judge reviewed the case and wrote: “His detention appears wholly lawless.”²⁹ The court record noted something else: the government had offered no evidence linking Abrego Garcia to MS-13 or to any terrorist activity.³⁰

On April 10, the Supreme Court stepped in. All nine justices. Unanimous. Bring him back.³¹

The administration replied that it had “no authority” to do so.³²

Then, while the court order remained unmet, the story changed.

The Department of Homeland Security issued a statement calling Abrego Garcia “a violent criminal illegal alien and MS-13 gang member.”³³ The President posted an image of Abrego Garcia’s knuckles and claimed the markings proved “MS-13.”³⁴ Tom Homan told ABC News: “We removed a public safety threat, a national security threat, a violent gang member from the United States.”³⁵

The court order still stood. No court had found him to be a gang member. Nothing had been proven in a court of law—only asserted in the court of public opinion.

When the President was told in an ABC interview that the image had been altered, he dismissed that and insisted it proved the claim anyway.³⁶

And then time did what it does.

The case stayed alive in filings and motions, while public attention moved on.

Months later, after continued litigation, Abrego Garcia was returned to the United States. He was immediately detained again, and removal proceedings were restarted.^{[37](#)}

On December 11, a judge ordered him released.^{[38](#)}

Today, eleven days later, that same judge is hearing arguments over whether the government can put him back in custody once more.^{[39](#)}

Each delay, each new argument—it wears the order down.

Even after four rulings, including a unanimous Supreme Court order, compliance remains partial and delayed.

This case is about whether court orders still bind the executive.

It's about whether court orders still end anything—or whether they've become moves in a waiting game, where time itself does the work.

Court orders are guardrails for everyone—whoever holds power next inherits them.

If we accept ignoring even unanimous orders, it becomes easier to ignore others—including ones that protect you.

The boundaries don't vanish all at once. They wear down while the clock runs—while each step is argued, reframed, and delayed until fatigue sets in.

And once fatigue replaces enforcement, boundaries exist mostly on paper.

I don't know about you, but I'm not comfortable with anyone—even someone I think I trust—being able to ignore court orders and then just wait until Congress gives up.

Power feels safe when aimed at someone else, until it turns toward you.

IV.

Security and secrecy matter. So does keeping the usual checks in place.

On February 21, the Defense Secretary fired two officers: Lt. Gen. Joseph Berger, the Army's top lawyer, and Lt. Gen. Charles Plummer, the Air Force's top lawyer.^{[40](#)} The

Judge Advocates General—JAGs.^{[41](#)} They advise commanders on whether planned operations follow the law of war.^{[42](#)}

The Secretary said he wanted “lawyers who give sound constitutional advice and don’t exist to attempt to be roadblocks.”^{[43](#)}

Twelve senators called it “a direct violation of federal law.”^{[44](#)} A Georgetown law professor said: “It’s what you do when you’re planning to break the law: you get rid of any lawyers who might try to slow you down.”^{[45](#)}

On November 18, six members of Congress released a video.^{[46](#)} All have military or intelligence backgrounds: Senator Elissa Slotkin, Senator Mark Kelly, Representatives Jason Crow, Chris Deluzio, Maggie Goodlander, and Chrissy Houlahan.^{[47](#)}

You can argue about the presentation. You can call it political or performative if you want.

What’s harder to argue with is the substance. The principle they cited is established law—embedded in the military code.^{[48](#)} And it has been part of international law since Nuremberg.^{[49](#)}

The video said: “Right now, the threats to our Constitution aren’t just coming from abroad, but from right here at home.”^{[50](#)}

Senator Kelly: “Our laws are clear: You can refuse illegal orders.”^{[51](#)}

Representative Crow: Service members “must refuse illegal orders.”^{[52](#)}

The President responded on Truth Social, calling it “SEDITIONOUS BEHAVIOR” and calling for arrests and trials.^{[53](#)} He used language about it being “punishable by death.”^{[54](#)}

On November 24, the Pentagon said it was reviewing misconduct allegations against Senator Kelly and referenced authority to recall him to active duty for court-martial proceedings.^{[55](#)} In mid-December, the Defense Secretary escalated this to an “official command investigation.”^{[56](#)}

Kelly, as a retired Navy officer, is the only one of the six still subject to military justice.^{[57](#)}

On November 25, the FBI opened an inquiry.⁵⁸ The counterterrorism division sought interviews with all six lawmakers.⁵⁹ Senator Slotkin said the FBI told them “it appears to be an inquiry against the six of us.”⁶⁰

Four of the House members issued a joint statement: “No amount of intimidation or harassment will ever stop us from doing our jobs and honoring our Constitution.”⁶¹

Senator Kelly said: “They’re trying to shut people up... But they picked the wrong guy. So I’m not going to shut up about this.”⁶²

Six elected lawmakers reminded service members about their legal duty. The response wasn’t to debate the law. It was to investigate them for sedition and threaten a sitting senator with court-martial.

If asking “Is this legal?” gets treated as disloyal, accountability is at significant risk.

In November, Human Rights Watch documented systematic beatings, torture, and sexual abuse at El Salvador’s CECOT prison, where the U.S. is sending deportees.⁶³ The prison was built to hold violent gang members—El Salvador has serious gang violence.⁶⁴ But HRW documented what’s happening to people we’re deporting there.⁶⁵ They said it creates “a foreseeable risk of torture.”⁶⁶

On December 21, CBS was scheduled to air a *60 Minutes* piece about that prison.⁶⁷ Hours before broadcast, they pulled it.⁶⁸ “More reporting” needed.⁶⁹ The correspondent said internally that letting government non-cooperation kill a story was giving them a “kill switch.”⁷⁰

The Pentagon has its own relationship with the press. Between January and September, it changed how journalists could operate there.⁷¹

First: evicted news organizations from their workspaces. Then: required government escorts anywhere reporters went. Then: required journalists to sign a pledge not to gather information—even unclassified—without authorization.⁷² Refuse, lose your credentials.⁷³

There are legitimate security reasons for restricting access to certain areas. That has always been true. Press access has long been governed by rules meant to balance security with transparency.⁷⁴

This measure alters that balance. It doesn't merely tighten access—it narrows the range of information that can be gathered at all.⁷⁵

Today, the President posted about The New York Times. He called them “a serious threat to the National Security of our Nation.” He said their behavior “must be dealt with and stopped.” He called them “A TRUE ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE!”⁷⁶

Not “they got something wrong.”

“Must be dealt with and stopped.”

In these cases, officials responded by sidelining the people raising the questions instead of addressing them.

And we move on to the next thing because there's always a next thing, and we've decided someone else is supposed to handle the checking.

V.

Every election cycle, we hear the same promise: *this* election will solve our problems. That the right person, once chosen, will fix what's broken. That the real danger is choosing wrong.

So we vote for the one who isn't the problem—and then we wait for them to protect us from it.

But the problems don't disappear. They escalate.

This year alone: a governor's house firebombed while his family slept.⁷⁷ A state house speaker and her husband shot dead in their home, a state senator and his wife shot the same night.⁷⁸ A plot to assassinate a U.S. senator.⁷⁹ A prominent political activist killed in public.⁸⁰ A school shooting—two dead, nine wounded, the 76th of the year.⁸¹

The fear is real. And it spreads.

In 2016, about half of Americans said elections caused serious stress.⁸² By 2024, it was 69%.⁸³ That same survey found 72% worried elections could lead to violence, and 56% feared they could end democracy itself.⁸⁴

Fear changes how people think.

When people are afraid enough, they stop asking where the limits are. They stop asking *who decides*. They start looking for someone to protect them. And protection, by definition, requires power.

Real problems exist. Minnesota had real fraud.^{[85](#) [86](#) [87](#) [88](#) [89](#) [90](#)} Caribbean waters have real drug trafficking.^{[91](#) [92](#) [93](#) [94](#) [95](#) [96](#) [97](#) [98](#) [99](#) [100](#)} There is real violence.^{[101](#) [102](#) [103](#) [104](#) [105](#)}

But watch what happens next.

Those real problems become the justification for crossing boundaries. Fraud by some becomes license to smear an entire community as “disgusting.”^{[106](#) [107](#)} Suspected drug boats—one in four of which are clean when inspected—become targets for lethal force without verification.^{[108](#) [109](#) [110](#) [111](#) [112](#) [113](#) [114](#) [115](#) [116](#) [117](#)}

Fear makes shortcuts feel reasonable. Necessary, even.^{[118](#)}

And when someone asks whether a line has been crossed, the response shifts. Courts become obstacles.^{[119](#)} Questions become accusations. Instead of addressing the concern, officials sideline the people raising it.^{[120](#)}

The answer is no longer “*Is this lawful?*” It becomes “*What about what they did?*”

Not because people are stupid. Because they’re scared.

And when you’re scared, handing responsibility to someone who promises protection feels like survival.

This isn’t new. In 2012, President Obama announced DACA after repeatedly saying he lacked authority to do it unilaterally.^{[121](#)} Some who warn about executive overreach today defended it then. Some who are silent now were vocal then.

That’s the point.

The question isn’t whether *your side* does it. The question is whether you’re comfortable with **anyone** having that power.

Because once it exists, it doesn’t disappear when the other side takes office.

You can support tough policies and still insist on verification and law. Different leaders. Same risk—whenever fear is used to bypass the limits that protect everyone.

You can refuse to accept “what about what they did?” as an answer. You can insist courts matter. You can say “that’s not right” when someone calls a whole community “disgusting”—even if it feels awkward. Small acts. But they add up to something.

VI.

People say: “I’m not perfect. I’ve made mistakes. Who am I to judge?”

That sounds humble. But it’s also how responsibility becomes impossible.

The people who stayed silent when I was growing up weren’t evil. They were ordinary. They had jobs, families, problems.

A philology professor who lived through it said: “You don’t want to act the fool. You wait and wait to see what the others will do. We didn’t become Nazi criminals because we wanted to. We simply drifted into it.”[122](#)

Another said: “I suppose most of us were cowards. It just seemed safer not to speak up.”[123](#)

One later admitted he avoided fundamental questions because daily life felt urgent.[124](#)

As one witness later said: Each small adjustment felt reasonable, until the standard of “acceptable” had shifted.

After the war, a German teacher wrote about how it happened: “Each step was so small, so well explained. We didn’t see it growing until it was over our heads.”[125](#)

Waiting to be perfect before you take responsibility means never taking it.

You don’t need to be perfect to notice when courts get ignored.[126](#) [127](#) [128](#) [129](#) [130](#) [131](#) [132](#) [133](#) [134](#) [135](#) [136](#) [137](#) [138](#) [139](#)

You don’t need to be perfect to ask why we’re killing people on boats when one in four checked boats are clean.[140](#) [141](#) [142](#) [143](#) [144](#) [145](#) [146](#) [147](#) [148](#) [149](#)

You don't need to be perfect to say calling a community "disgusting people" is wrong.^{[150](#) [151](#)}

You can be wrong about some things and still ask questions about others. You can disagree with me completely and still hold power accountable.

The goal isn't perfection. The goal is to not transfer everything upward and call it practical wisdom or, worse, "patriotism".

VII.

Standing in a Cleveland courthouse in 1956, I heard: "We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution."^{[152](#)}

We the People don't elect someone to handle everything. We establish the framework and hold everyone—including ourselves—to it.^{[153](#)}

The President has to follow the law.^{[154](#)} Congress makes the laws.^{[155](#)} Courts interpret those laws to keep them alive, to fit them to the context of each case.^{[156](#)}

But those boundaries only work if ordinary people refuse to look away when they're crossed.

Laws don't enforce themselves. Courts don't defend themselves. Institutions don't protect themselves.

Only people do. By noticing. By saying something. By refusing to accept that there's nothing we can do.

Earlier this year, the administration created DOGE—Department of Government Efficiency.^{[157](#)} Said it would save billions.^{[158](#)} Called it a "Manhattan Project."^{[159](#)}

DOGE got access to everything.^{[160](#)} Employee records. Payment systems. Social Security numbers for nearly every American.^{[161](#)} About 200,000 federal workers lost jobs.^{[162](#)}

In August, a whistleblower filed a complaint: DOGE had copied Social Security data—300 million people’s information—onto inadequately secured systems.¹⁶³ Internal reports said breach risk was “catastrophic,” 35-65% likely.¹⁶⁴ No audit logging—if someone stole it, there’d be no way to know.¹⁶⁵ Security officials complained. DOGE said: “business need is higher than security risk.”¹⁶⁶

Leadership left in May.¹⁶⁷ By November, the government said DOGE “no longer exists.”¹⁶⁸ Congressional analysis: it cost more than it saved.¹⁶⁹

We said: “They’ll handle it. They know what they’re doing.”

They left. The vulnerabilities remain. The promises faded without being kept or checked. We’ve moved on.

That’s what happens when “We the People” becomes “Let them handle it.”

Before I left Germany, I made a promise to myself: if I ever saw the small steps starting again—giving responsibility away, looking to authority instead of ourselves, the silence that becomes normal—I wouldn’t wait until it was over my head to notice.

I’m noticing.

I don’t know what comes next. Nobody does. But I recognize the habit I saw as a child—handing judgment upward because it feels safer. Because the problems feel too big. Because surely someone else knows better.

A German who lived through it said: “Most of us did not want to think about fundamental things. There was no point. We all felt we had to accept whatever it was. And we were busy with our lives.”¹⁷⁰

So I’m speaking.

Not to tell you what to think. Not to predict what happens. Just to say: I see the same pattern of what happens when people stop feeling responsible for knowing what’s true.

And I’m watching “We the People” stop meaning us and start meaning whoever we’re waiting to save us.

Each of us decides every day—in small ways—whether to take responsibility for knowing what’s true, or to accept what we’re told. Whether to say “That’s not right,” or to keep things comfortable. Whether to expect courts to matter, or to shrug when they’re ignored. Whether to notice when watchdogs get fired, or to move on. Whether to ask questions, or to accept “what about what they did” as the answer.

Small choices. But they add up.

Samuel Adams said in 1776: “If ye love wealth better than liberty... Crouch down and lick the hands which feed you.”¹⁷¹

He was describing a choice we still make. Every day. Usually quietly.

We make it when we keep our heads down at work. When we don’t ask questions we know we should. When we tell ourselves it’s not worth risking the job, the promotion, the house, the vacation we’ve worked so hard for.

Comfort has always been the easiest thing to trade liberty for.¹⁷²

I’m 90 now.¹⁷³ I came here believing “We the People” meant something different than what I left behind.

I still want to believe that.

On December 5, FIFA created a new peace prize and awarded the first one to the President.¹⁷⁴

The prize did not exist the month before.¹⁷⁵

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64. CECOT built for violent gang members including MS-13. [\[?\]](#)
65. HRW report; 81 pages documenting abuse of Venezuelan deportees. [\[?\]](#)
66. Ibid.; foreseeable torture risk. [\[?\]](#)
67. CBS News, December 21, 2025; Reuters, December 22, 2025; Associated Press, December 22, 2025; segment titled “Inside CECOT” scheduled for broadcast. [\[?\]](#)
68. CBS News announcement December 21, 2025, three hours before scheduled airtime; segment pulled from broadcast lineup. [\[?\]](#)
69. CBS News statement per Reuters and AP; spokesperson said segment “needed additional reporting.” [\[?\]](#)
70. Sharyn Alfonsi internal memo to CBS colleagues, reported by The New York Times, December 22, 2025; NBC News, December 23, 2025; described government non-cooperation creating “kill switch” for story publication. [\[?\]](#)
71. NPR, May 24, 2025; timeline of changes January-September 2025. [\[?\]](#)
72. Pentagon Press Office Guidance, September 18, 2025; NPR, September 20, 2025; ABC News, September 20, 2025; specific policy requiring journalists to sign pledge restricting information gathering without pre-authorization; applies to Pentagon campus access. [\[?\]](#)
73. Federal News Network, September 20, 2025; CNN Business, September 22, 2025. [\[?\]](#)
74. Longstanding White House Correspondents’ Association and Pentagon press corps standards govern security protocols, credentials, access to classified vs. unclassified areas; these frameworks predate 2025 changes. [\[?\]](#)
75. Pledge requirement extends to all information gathering without pre-authorization, going beyond existing security protocols. [\[?\]](#)

76. Trump Truth Social, December 22, 2025; excerpts from full post: “serious threat to the National Security”; “must be dealt with and stopped”; “A TRUE ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE!”; archived by Media Matters.[\[?\]](#)
77. NPR, April 14, 2025; ABC News, April 17, 2025.[\[?\]](#)
78. ABC News, June 15, 2025; DOJ press release, June 16, 2025.[\[?\]](#)
79. Louisville Courier-Journal, July 23, 2025; FBI statement.[\[?\]](#)
80. NBC News, September 11, 2025.[\[?\]](#)
81. CNN, December 15, 2025; Brown University shooting, December 13, 2025; Gun Violence Archive 2025 reports at least 75 school shootings through December 13, making Brown approximately the 76th.[\[?\]](#)
82. American Psychological Association, *Stress in America* 2016.[\[?\]](#)
83. APA, *Stress in America* 2024; PBS Wisconsin, November 4, 2024.[\[?\]](#)
84. APA 2024 survey.[\[?\]](#)
85. U.S. Department of Justice press release, March 19, 2025; Star Tribune, March 19, 2025.[\[?\]](#)
86. DOJ indictments; Feeding Our Future nonprofit, false claims for meals never served; CBS Minnesota, October 25, 2024.[\[?\]](#)
87. DOJ trial records; CBS Minnesota, October 25, 2024.[\[?\]](#)
88. NPR, December 2, 2025; NBC News, December 2, 2025; speech Mount Pocono, Pennsylvania.[\[?\]](#)
89. Trump speech, December 9, 2025; CNN, December 10, 2025; ABC News, December 10, 2025.[\[?\]](#)
90. Federal prosecutors stated at trial that Aimee Bock personally received approximately \$1.9 million from the Feeding Our Future fraud scheme, according to court filings and contemporaneous reporting.[\[?\]](#)
91. U.S. Coast Guard FY2024 Performance Report; PolitiFact, October 22, 2025; 125 vessel interdictions.[\[?\]](#)

92. Ibid.; 91 of 125 vessels contained drugs (73% success rate).[\[?\]](#)
93. Calculation: $91 \div 125 = 72.8\%$, approximately 3 in 4.[\[?\]](#)
94. U.S. Coast Guard FY2024 Performance Report; 34 of 125 vessels contained no drugs; 27.2%, approximately 1 in 4.[\[?\]](#)
95. NPR, September 16, 2025; ABC News, September 20, 2025; The Center Square, December 4, 2025; Reuters, December 4, 2025. Total: Sept 2 (11), Sept 15 (3), Sept 20 (3+) = at least 17 reported deaths.[\[?\]](#)
96. Washington Post, September 3, 2025; Trump Truth Social, September 2 and 15, 2025.[\[?\]](#)
97. Human Rights Watch, September 18, 2025; no arrests or trials before lethal force; no documented boarding/verification procedures reported before strikes.[\[?\]](#)
98. Human Rights Watch, "US: Maritime Strikes Amount to Extrajudicial Killings," September 18, 2025.[\[?\]](#)
99. Daphne Eviatar, Amnesty International, quoted in NPR, September 16, 2025.[\[?\]](#)
100. JD Vance, X/Twitter, September 6, 2025; exact quote: "I don't give a shit what you call it"; PBS News, September 12, 2025.[\[?\]](#)
101. NPR, April 14, 2025; ABC News, April 17, 2025.[\[?\]](#)
102. ABC News, June 15, 2025; DOJ press release, June 16, 2025.[\[?\]](#)
103. Louisville Courier-Journal, July 23, 2025; FBI statement.[\[?\]](#)
104. NBC News, September 11, 2025.[\[?\]](#)
105. CNN, December 15, 2025; Brown University shooting, December 13, 2025; Gun Violence Archive 2025 reports at least 75 school shootings through December 13, making Brown approximately the 76th.[\[?\]](#)
106. NPR, December 2, 2025; NBC News, December 2, 2025; speech Mount Pocono, Pennsylvania.[\[?\]](#)

107. Trump speech, December 9, 2025; CNN, December 10, 2025; ABC News, December 10, 2025. [\[?\]](#)
108. U.S. Coast Guard FY2024 Performance Report; PolitiFact, October 22, 2025; 125 vessel interdictions. [\[?\]](#)
109. Ibid.; 91 of 125 vessels contained drugs (73% success rate). [\[?\]](#)
110. Calculation: $91 \div 125 = 72.8\%$, approximately 3 in 4. [\[?\]](#)
111. U.S. Coast Guard FY2024 Performance Report; 34 of 125 vessels contained no drugs; 27.2%, approximately 1 in 4. [\[?\]](#)
112. NPR, September 16, 2025; ABC News, September 20, 2025; The Center Square, December 4, 2025; Reuters, December 4, 2025. Total: Sept 2 (11), Sept 15 (3), Sept 20 (3+) = at least 17 reported deaths. [\[?\]](#)
113. Washington Post, September 3, 2025; Trump Truth Social, September 2 and 15, 2025. [\[?\]](#)
114. Human Rights Watch, September 18, 2025; no arrests or trials before lethal force; no documented boarding/verification procedures reported before strikes. [\[?\]](#)
115. Human Rights Watch, "US: Maritime Strikes Amount to Extrajudicial Killings," September 18, 2025. [\[?\]](#)
116. Daphne Eviatar, Amnesty International, quoted in NPR, September 16, 2025. [\[?\]](#)
117. JD Vance, X/Twitter, September 6, 2025; exact quote: "I don't give a shit what you call it"; PBS News, September 12, 2025. [\[?\]](#)
118. Milton Mayer, *They Thought They Were Free: The Germans, 1933-45* (University of Chicago Press, 1955), pp. 169-170. [\[?\]](#)
119. Trump attacks on judges; Fritz letter September 28, 2025; see also footnotes 29-39 documenting judicial order violations. [\[?\]](#)
120. Combined references: Hegseth on JAGs (footnote 43); Pentagon restrictions, CBS segment, NYT post (footnotes 67-76). [\[?\]](#)

121. President Obama, June 15, 2012, DACA announcement; FactCheck.org, September 2014; Politico timeline.[\[?\]](#)
122. Milton Mayer, *They Thought They Were Free*, p. 168; quote from philology professor.[\[?\]](#)
123. Ibid., p. 170; quote from subject describing cowardice.[\[?\]](#)
124. Ibid., p. 166; paraphrased - subject describing avoidance of fundamental questions due to daily urgency.[\[?\]](#)
125. Ibid., pp. 169-170; German teacher quote.[\[?\]](#)
126. 2019 immigration court order granting “withholding of removal”; case filings.[\[?\]](#)
127. U.S. Constitution, Article II, Section 3; Article III, Section 1; executive must comply with judicial rulings.[\[?\]](#)
128. NPR, April 17, 2025; FactCheck.org, May 7, 2025; deported March 15, 2025.[\[?\]](#)
129. U.S. District Court Judge Paula Xinis ruling, April 4, 2025; NPR, April 17, 2025.[\[?\]](#)
130. U.S. District Court filing, April 6, 2025; court record noted government “offered no evidence linking Abrego Garcia to MS-13 or to any terrorist activity”; NPR reporting summarizing evidentiary record.[\[?\]](#)
131. Supreme Court emergency ruling, April 10, 2025; SCOTUSblog, April 10, 2025; unanimous.[\[?\]](#)
132. Al Jazeera, July 23, 2025.[\[?\]](#)
133. Department of Homeland Security public statement, April 16, 2025; described Abrego Garcia as “a violent criminal illegal alien and MS-13 gang member”; NPR and Associated Press.[\[?\]](#)
134. Trump Truth Social post, April 18, 2025; shared image of Abrego Garcia’s knuckles claiming markings indicated MS-13; NPR and ABC News.[\[?\]](#)

135. Tom Homan interview with ABC News, April 18, 2025: “We removed a public safety threat, a national security threat, a violent gang member from the United States.” [\[?\]](#)
136. ABC News interview, April 29, 2025; Trump told image had been altered, dismissed and insisted photo proved MS-13 affiliation. [\[?\]](#)
137. ABC News, July-August 2025; immediately detained and removal proceedings restarted upon return. [\[?\]](#)
138. ABC News, December 11, 2025; Judge Xinis release order. [\[?\]](#)
139. Spectrum News/ AP, December 22, 2025. [\[?\]](#)
140. U.S. Coast Guard FY2024 Performance Report; PolitiFact, October 22, 2025; 125 vessel interdictions. [\[?\]](#)
141. Ibid.; 91 of 125 vessels contained drugs (73% success rate). [\[?\]](#)
142. Calculation: $91 \div 125 = 72.8\%$, approximately 3 in 4. [\[?\]](#)
143. U.S. Coast Guard FY2024 Performance Report; 34 of 125 vessels contained no drugs; 27.2%, approximately 1 in 4. [\[?\]](#)
144. NPR, September 16, 2025; ABC News, September 20, 2025; The Center Square, December 4, 2025; Reuters, December 4, 2025. Total: Sept 2 (11), Sept 15 (3), Sept 20 (3+) = at least 17 reported deaths. [\[?\]](#)
145. Washington Post, September 3, 2025; Trump Truth Social, September 2 and 15, 2025. [\[?\]](#)
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147. Human Rights Watch, “US: Maritime Strikes Amount to Extrajudicial Killings,” September 18, 2025. [\[?\]](#)
148. Daphne Eviatar, Amnesty International, quoted in NPR, September 16, 2025. [\[?\]](#)
149. JD Vance, X/Twitter, September 6, 2025; exact quote: “I don’t give a shit what you call it”; PBS News, September 12, 2025. [\[?\]](#)

150. NPR, December 2, 2025; NBC News, December 2, 2025; speech Mount Pocono, Pennsylvania. [\[?\]](#)
151. Trump speech, December 9, 2025; CNN, December 10, 2025; ABC News, December 10, 2025. [\[?\]](#)
152. U.S. Constitution, Preamble. [\[?\]](#)
153. U.S. Constitution, separation of powers framework. [\[?\]](#)
154. U.S. Constitution, Article II, Section 3. [\[?\]](#)
155. U.S. Constitution, Article I, Section 1. [\[?\]](#)
156. U.S. Constitution, Article III, Section 1; Marbury v. Madison (1803). [\[?\]](#)
157. Executive Order, January 20, 2025. [\[?\]](#)
158. White House fact sheets. [\[?\]](#)
159. Trump statements January 2025. [\[?\]](#)
160. TechCrunch; whistleblower accounts; DOGE teams embedded with extensive data access. [\[?\]](#)
161. NUMIDENT database; 300+ million records; SSA documentation. [\[?\]](#)
162. Partnership for Public Service; Congressional estimates. [\[?\]](#)
163. Whistleblower complaint August 26, 2025; Charles Borges, SSA Chief Data Officer; Government Accountability Project; alleges unauthorized database copying to inadequately secured cloud system. [\[?\]](#)
164. SSA internal assessment June 16, 2025; quoted in whistleblower complaint; assessment characterized breach risk as “catastrophic” at 35-65% likelihood. [\[?\]](#)
165. Whistleblower complaint; alleges cloud system lacked audit logging capability. [\[?\]](#)
166. Internal SSA documents cited in whistleblower disclosures; DOGE response characterized as prioritizing “business need” over security concerns. [\[?\]](#)
167. Leadership departure May 30, 2025. [\[?\]](#)

168. OPM announcement November 2025. [\[?\]](#)
169. Congressional Budget Office analysis. [\[?\]](#)
170. Milton Mayer, *They Thought They Were Free*, p. 166; quote about accepting and being busy with lives. [\[?\]](#)
171. Samuel Adams, August 1, 1776, State House, Philadelphia. [\[?\]](#)
172. Benjamin Franklin warned against this impulse in 1755, writing: “Those who would give up essential Liberty, to purchase a little temporary Safety, deserve neither Liberty nor Safety.” Franklin’s argument concerned political self-governance and public acquiescence to authority in exchange for security. [\[?\]](#)
173. Fritz born 1935; 90 in 2025. [\[?\]](#)
174. FIFA announcement and reporting confirming creation of a new peace prize and its first award to the President on December 5, 2025. (CNN, December 4–5, 2025; ESPN, December 5, 2025.) [\[?\]](#)
175. Reporting confirming the prize was newly created in November 2025 and had no prior history. (CNN background reporting; FIFA statements, November 2025.) [\[?\]](#)